

STANDARD
FOR
MAINTAINING VEGETATION

Definition

The perpetuation of vegetative cover.

Purpose

To ensure the continuing vigor and function of vegetative cover and enhance the environment. It is usually less costly to carry on a maintenance program than it is to make repairs after an extended period of neglect.

Water Quality Enhancement

Ensures adequate permanent cover and prevents exposure of soils to erosion and off site sedimentation from stormwater runoff impacts.

Where Applicable

On areas where existing vegetation protects or enhances the environment.

Methods and Materials

A preventive maintenance program anticipates requirements and accomplishes work when it can be done with least effort and expense to insure adequate vegetative cover.

Maintenance should occur on a regular basis, consistent with favorable plant growth, soil, and climatic conditions. This involves regular seasonal work for mowing, fertilizing, liming, watering, pruning, fire control, weed and pest control, reseeding, and timely repairs.

The degree of preventive maintenance needed depends upon the type of vegetation and its proposed function or use.

1. Mowing is a recurring practice and its intensity depends upon the function of the ground cover. On high to moderate (A to B) maintenance areas, such as lawns, certain recreation fields, and picnic areas, mowing will be frequent (2 to 7 day intervals) and typically at a height of 2.5 to 3 inches. Return clippings from mowing (mulching mower) to the turf to reduce the amount of fertilizer needed to maintain the turf by as much as 50%. Some turf mixtures can be managed as naturalized stands requiring only one (cool season mixtures) or two (warm season mixtures) mowings per year. Mowing of naturalized areas is typically done at heights no less than 4 inches and should not be done between April 1st and July 15th to avoid disturbing ground nesting birds. The large amount of clipping debris generated by mowing naturalized areas will need to be removed and/or dispersed so the vegetation is not smothered. Burning of naturalized areas is another procedure used to manage naturalized turfs. Low maintenance (D) areas may be left unmowed to permit natural succession. See pg. 4-13 footnote #4, Maintenance Levels A, B, C and D in the Standard for Permanent Vegetative Cover, Table 4-3.
2. Incorporation of organic matter (for example, mature compost) into the soil will substantially reduce the need for fertilizer and irrigation inputs.
3. Fertilizer and lime should be applied as needed to maintain a dense stand of desirable species. Frequently mowed areas and those on sandy soils will require more frequent fertilization but at lower nutrient rates per

application.

4. Lime requirement should be determined by soil testing every 2 or 3 years. Fertilization may increase the need for liming. Contact the local county extension office for details on soil testing and fertilization and pest control recommendations online at <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/>.
5. Fertilization and additions of other soil amendments are not recommended for managing native vegetation such as in the Pinelands National Reserve. See the Standard for Permanent Vegetative Stabilization for specific requirements in the PNR.
6. Weed invasion may result from abusive mowing and from inadequate fertilizing and liming. Many newly established grasses will not survive if mowed at heights below 2.5 inches and at intervals greater than 7 days. Brush invasion is a common consequence of lack of mowing. The amount of weeds or brush that can be tolerated in any vegetated area depends upon the intended use of the land. Drainage ways are subject to rapid infestation by weed and woody plants. These should be controlled, since they often reduce drainage way efficiency. Control of weeds or brush is accomplished by using herbicides or mechanical methods.
7. Fire hazard is greater where dry vegetation has accumulated. The taller the vegetation, the greater the hazard.
8. Prune trees and shrubs to remove dead or damaged branches. Remove undesirable or invasive plants to maintain integrity of the landscape and enhance quality of permanent vegetative cover.